

Divisions affected: Henley-on-Thames

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 29 APRIL 2021**

### **HENLEY – A4155 MARLOW ROAD – PROPOSED PUFFIN CROSSING**

Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the provision of a puffin crossing at A4155 Marlow Road, Henley, as advertised.

#### **Executive summary**

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on a proposed zebra crossing on the A4155 Marlow Road, Henley, as shown at Annex 1 put forward to address concerns raised over the safety of pedestrians crossing Marlow Road near Swiss Farm.

#### **Financial Implications**

3. Funding has been provided by Henley on Thames Town Council.

#### **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

#### **Sustainability Implications**

5. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of pedestrians.

#### **Consultation**

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 29 January and 26 February 2021. A notice was published in the Henley Standard newspaper and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, South Oxfordshire District Council, Henley on Thames Town Council and local County Councillor. Notices were placed on site and letters also sent to premises adjacent to the proposals.
7. One hundred and thirty-two responses were received during the formal consultation. 4 objections, 2 expressions of concern and 126 in support. The responses from Thames Valley Police and those expressing an objection or

concern are shown at Annex 2. Copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

## **Response to objections and other comments**

8. Thames Valley Police did not object.
9. County Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, the local member for Henley on Thames, supports the proposal and comments further:

The crossing has met with overwhelming support from members of the public as it is much needed. The crossing is within the built environment having a speed limit of 30 mph. In the traffic counts for vehicles and pedestrians the conclusion was: -

During a 12 Hr period there were:  
3,624 car movements  
452 pedestrians trying to cross the road, including:  
6 wheelchair crossings  
101 Accompanied Under-16s  
9 Unaccompanied Under-16s

This alone demonstrates the absolute need for a crossing at this point. If 452 people are trying to cross this road with 3,624 car movements, you can only imagine how long it would take to cross the road. A puffin crossing would make this act safe and stress-free. This crossing would serve some 80 dwellings and 160+ residents. Plus during the summer camping takes place on this site and visitors travel across the road and walk into Henley. They need to cross the road because that is where the footpath is. It is also where the bus stop is and both of these measures we have sought to approve as part of our Active Travel agenda where we encourage walking, cycling and bus travel. In conclusion, Henley and its community have shown the overwhelming need for this crossing.

10. Henley Town Council supports the crossing.
11. A resident objected stating that light-controlled crossings are bad for the environment and make drivers frustrated when (as often happens) the lights are red and there's not a pedestrian in sight; zebra crossings work perfectly well and should be considered instead.

### Officer response

The puffin-type of crossing includes microwave detectors that sense the continued presence of pedestrians and require the button to be pressed to accept a request for the lights to change. This should prevent any instances of lights changing to red when no pedestrians are present.

12. Another resident asks why this crossing is proposed whereas teams of rugby players, hundreds of children and numerous dog walkers cross the Marlow Road less than 100 meters further south. Installing a footpath on the west

side of the road and a new crossing near the public footpath that also leads to the rugby pitches – would serve the busiest crossing point on that road.

Officer response

The advertised crossing location would facilitate pedestrians being able to cross from Swiss Farm to a bus stop that serves the direction of travel on the opposite side of the road. There is no footpath on the west side of the road and so, without a crossing facility, pedestrians would either have to walk about 250m or cross the road anyway. This demand for a crossing point at Swiss Farm is considered to be more constant than the one mentioned near the rugby pitches. To provide 250m of new footway would cost considerably more than the puffin crossing and may entail compulsory purchase of private land.

13. Two residents objected stating the proposed crossing would put yet more street furniture in a country road, being a rural entrance to the town, that they rarely have a problem crossing because of traffic and that rather there is a problem with speeding cars. Could a speed camera be considered as a much cheaper option than the crossing? When the police used to do regular speed checks here they caught large numbers of speeding drivers. It will be far more dangerous to have a crossing near such a busy entrance than a simple speed camera.

Officer response

The Thames Valley Safer Roads partnership do not have a policy for installing further speed cameras. Given the proximity of the change in speed limit from 30mph to 40mph just north of the proposed crossing location, even if a speed camera were to be provided, the criteria for positioning it means that it would be some way south of Swiss Farm, and thus may not achieve the speed reduction wished for. This would still not resolve the difficulties for pedestrians crossing, particularly at busy times.

14. Most of the residents on Swiss Farm are over 70, and 2 residents raise concern that there would be difficulties with accessing the crossing to press the button as there is currently a grass verge where the proposed crossing will be and no path for access from Swiss Farm. Is there to be a pathway to the crossing made available? One of the residents is generally concerned about road safety, having been knocked down previously when crossing.

Officer response

Yes, a short section of new footway, some 20m long, will be provided to enable pedestrians to gain access across the verge to the crossing point from the Swiss Farm entrance. It is hoped that the provision of a crossing will enhance road safety, and that the likelihood of future incidents of pedestrians being struck will be reduced.

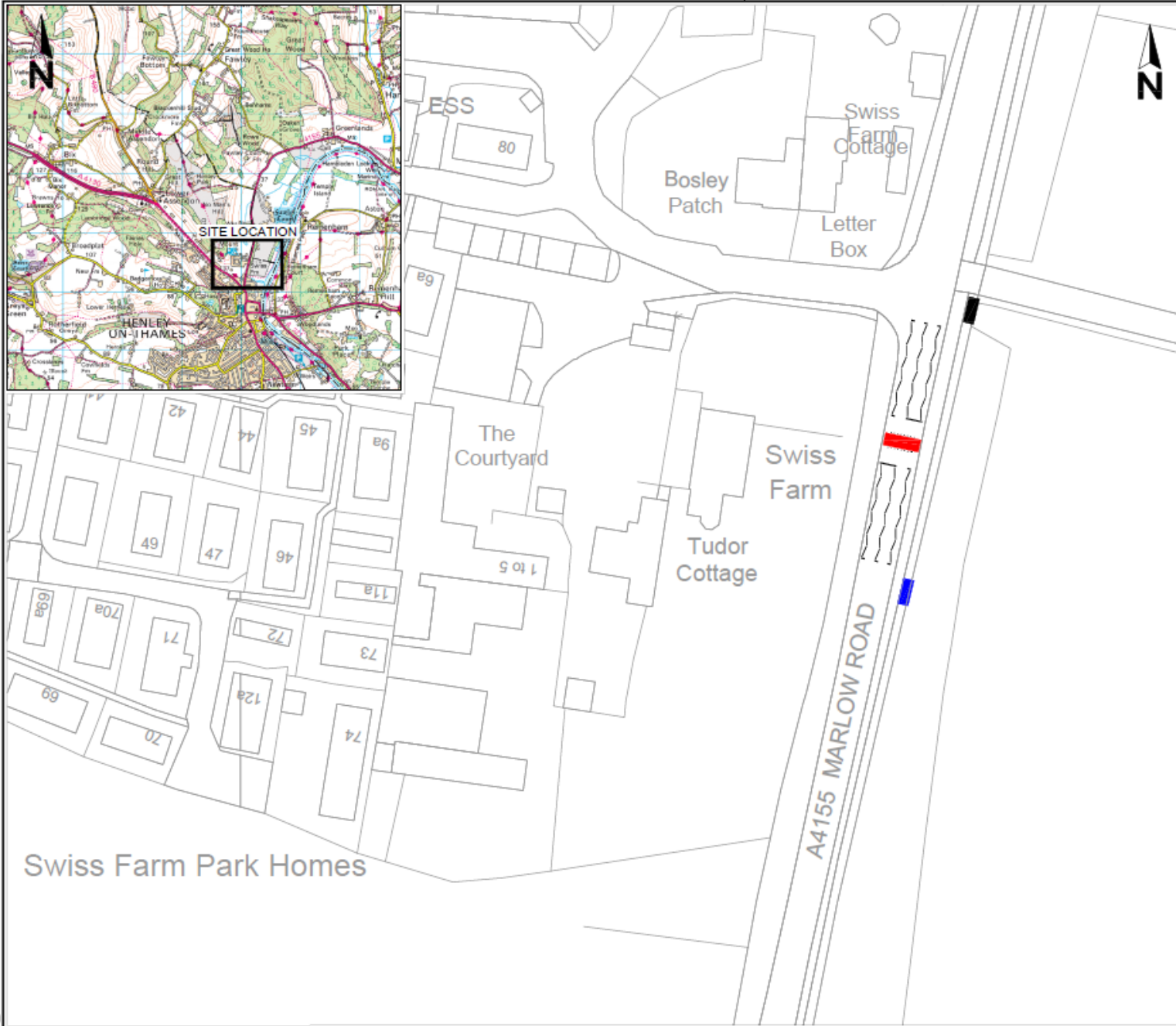
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Strategic Director, Environment and Place

Annexes                      Annex 1: Plan of proposed puffin crossing  
Annex 2: Consultation responses

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April 2021



Drawing No. Revision 0

- Key**
- █ Proposed Puffin Crossing to be located approx 25m south of entrance to Swiss Farm
  - █ Revised Bus Stop location
  - █ Existing Bus Stop location

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| Rev. | Date | Purpose of revision | Drawn | Checked | Approved |
|------|------|---------------------|-------|---------|----------|
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Project title:  
**A4155 MARLOW ROAD, HENLEY ON THAMES  
 SIGNAL CONTROLLED PUFFIN CROSSING**

Drawing title:  
**CONSULTATION PLAN**

Drawing Status: SWISS01

| Scale @ A3 | Drawn by   | Checked by   | Approved by   |
|------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| N.T.S.     | Jac        |              |               |
|            | Date drawn | Date checked | Date approved |
|            | 11/20      |              |               |

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No. Revision 0

| RESPONDENT   | COMMENTS   |
|--|--|
| (1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police) | <b>No objection</b> - providing that the necessary speed monitoring has taken place and results support such features. The crossing fully complies with current design standards.  |
| (2) Henley Town Council                                | <b>Support</b> - Pedestrian and traffic counts have both demonstrated the need for this crossing at a popular place for residents and visitors. It helps to reinforce the desire to put people before cars and both through facilitation of walking and access to the bus stop, will reduce traffic entering Henley and therefore aid a reduction in the dangerously high pollution levels in the town.  |
| (3) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)                  | <b>Object</b> - Light controlled crossings are bad for the environment and make drivers frustrated when (as often happens) the lights are red and there's not a pedestrian in sight. Zebra crossings work perfectly well and, in my opinion should replace all light controlled crossings in the town except where there's a road junction as well.  |
| (4) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)                  | <b>Object</b> - Why build a crossing on the Marlow road 25 meters from Swiss Farm when teams of rugby players, hundreds of children and numerous dog walkers cross the same road less than 100 meters further south down the same road. I can only think the council is considering installing the crossing so close to Swiss Farm due to their current planning applications. Surely installing a footpath on the west side of the Marlow Road and place the crossing opposite the footpath that leads to the footpath and rugby pitches. God forbid that there is never an accident on that stretch of road and how would the council explain that they installed two crossings 100 meters either side of the busiest crossing point on that road. |
| (5) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)                  | <b>Object</b> - It would, in my opinion, be a shame to put yet more street furniture in what is still a country road. Also having lived here for very many years I very rarely have a problem crossing the road because of traffic. What I do have a problem with is the number of speeding cars. That, to me is the danger. I notice that the speed camera on the Fairmile entry to Henley is a great deterrent to speeding and surly a much cheaper option than the ped x and could even make a little money.  |
| (6) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)                  | <b>Object</b> - I would like to add my voice to those expressing alarm at the idea of a crossing. We have lived here for very many years and at no time have felt unable to cross the road whenever we wish. The problem is the gathering speed with which traffic now goes in and out of Henley. Many years ago, I was instrumental in getting the 30 mph. signs moved and several years after that the flashing signs were installed. The sign leaving Henley has not now been   |

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|  | <p>working for nearly two years. The police used to do regular speed checks from our entrance but have not been since early last summer. When they are here, they catch very large numbers of speeding drivers. We feel that it will be far more dangerous to have a crossing near such a busy entrance than a simple speed camera. The speeds, now totally unchecked, are reaching ridiculous levels both in and out of the town. What is also needed is for the trees on the opposite side to be cut back to allow more light into the road and the opposite pavement to be properly cleared to allow pedestrians to walk more safely into the town. This is still a relatively rural entrance to the town please let's keep it that way.</p> |
| <p>(7) Local Resident<br/>(Henley on Thames)</p> | <p><b>Concerns</b> – I am fully supportive of a Puffin crossing but I would wish to raise the practicalities of the proposed positioning of the crossing. I would arrive at the entrance of Swiss Farm and have no way to indicate my wish to cross the road. I would just have to hope that someone was close to the crossing. The 30mph is completely ignored and I have been knocked down whilst crossing. The person at the entrance needs to have control of the crossing and at the present location of the bus stop. It appears to me that no consideration has been given to the practicalities of using the crossing by people exiting Swiss Farm.</p>   |
| <p>(8) Local Resident<br/>(Henley on Thames)</p> | <p><b>Concerns</b> - I am unsure of the end result of the proposal for a puffin crossing south of Swiss Farm as there is currently a grass verge where the proposed crossing will be and no path for access from Swiss Farm. The plan does not make clear if this is to be cleared and a pathway to the crossing made available?</p>  |